



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie's "Seeds of Success" Program to Take Root in 20 New School Districts

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In an effort to teach more of our region's young people about the importance of nutrition and farming, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing her "Seeds of Success" program will expand into 20 new school districts this year.

"I started this program to put an educational focus on fresh foods as a way to improve the health and nutrition of our children, while showing them how to grow and process their own

food,” Senator Ritchie said. “By exposing our students to agriculture early on, the hope is they not only improve their health for the rest of their lives, but perhaps take an interest in agriculture and as they get older, begin to consider it as a career, ensuring the success of this entire industry’s future.”

Senator Ritchie started “Seeds of Success” in 2017 by providing funding to 12 area school districts to help their students understand the importance of farm-fresh foods and where those foods come from. Those schools used the money to create an agricultural curriculum that included school gardens, the building of grow racks and raised garden beds, the growing of flowers and one district is even raising fish. In addition, food grown by students was included in school lunches and donated to local food pantries.

Through the second round of funding for the initiative, 20 school districts across Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties will each receive \$5,000 for a “Seeds of Success” program.

School districts receiving funding include:

Oswego County:

Altmar-Parish-Williamstown School District

Mexico Academy and Central School District

Phoenix Central School District

Pulaski Academy and Central School District

Sandy Creek Central School District

Jefferson County:

Alexandria Central School District

Copenhagen Central School District

Indian River Central School District

LaFargeville Central School District

Lyme Central School District

Thousand Islands Central School District

Watertown City School District

St. Lawrence County:

Canton Central School District

Hammond Central School District

Hermon-DeKalb Central School District

Lisbon Central School District

Madrid-Waddington Central School District

Massena Central School District

Ogdensburg City School District

St. Lawrence – Lewis BOCES

“The ‘Seeds of Success’ program is an excellent way to provide our students with another opportunity that they might not have had without this funding. The Phoenix Central School District prides itself on ensuring our students receive a well-rounded education. Seeds of Success will help our students better understand the importance of farm-fresh foods and better appreciate the hardworking farmers in our community that provide them. Thank you Senator Ritchie for recognizing how important the overall education of our students truly is and for helping us infuse agricultural education into our school district.” said Phoenix Central School District Superintendent Christopher Byrne.

“We are very appreciative of this funding through Senator Ritchie's office to help us expand our school's in-house growing of fruits and vegetables. The addition of grow racks and sustainable gardens that are designed and managed by students will help them learn firsthand important agricultural practices. We also hope to expand our composting in our district and create raised garden beds in and around our school. Agriculture is a major part of our district from dairy farming to maple production. Students, teachers and community members will be encouraged to be a part of this opportunity for the school,” Hermon-DeKalb Central School District Superintendent Mark White said.

“As a small city school district, we have a number of students who have not had experience with agriculture. ‘Seeds of Success’ is a great way to introduce something new to our students, help them better understand the importance of knowing where their food comes from, and perhaps show them a future they never considered before. We are beyond grateful to Senator Ritchie for considering the Watertown City School District for this funding. We look forward to seeing how it helps improve the future of agriculture in our community,” Watertown City School District Superintendent Patti LaBarr said.

With the average age of a New York farmer now at 57, Senator Ritchie has been working to encourage more young people to become interested in pursuing future careers in farming. In

addition to her “Seeds of Success” program, in recent years she has also spearheaded efforts to attract people to the profession including most recently securing \$1 million in the new state budget for the fifth round of her “New Farmers Grant Fund.” The grant program provides up funding to help those new to the industry cover startup costs, including the purchase of land and equipment.